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ABSTRACT

The primary goal of this practicum was to provide opportunities for rich and diverse language activities designed to enhance the kindergarten curriculum. New instructional guidelines were designed that encouraged daily classroom time devoted to language development activities. These activities replaced all formal isolated skill instruction. Alternative forms of assessment were developed that were direct, classroom-oriented, and process-focused. Monthly book swaps were scheduled to increase the amount and encourage the recycling of the available printed material in each classroom. The circulation of current educational research regarding emergent literacy and techniques to encourage and support its growth was arranged to increase teacher awareness and encourage the development of positive attitudes. An analysis of the practicum revealed that all but one of the objectives were achieved. The monthly book swaps did encourage the recycling of printed material but failed to significantly increase the amount. All other objectives were successful and some even surpassed expectations. The kindergarten curriculum was enhanced with rich and diverse language development activities, and both teachers and students demonstrated positive attitudes regarding this enrichment. (Five tables of data are included and 34 references are attached. Appendixes include instructional guidelines, reading checklist, revised checklist, teacher survey, and teacher suggestions for kindergarten programs.) (Author/MG)

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Enhancing the Kindergarten Curriculum Through the Addition of Rich and Diverse Language Development Activities

by

Judith Anen

Cluster 36

A Practicum I Report presented to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1991

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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January 27, 1991

Date

This practicum was submitted by Judith Anen under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Feb. 15, 1991

Date of Final Approval of Report

Wm. B. Anderson

Dr. William Anderson, Ph.D., Adviser

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS iv

LIST OF TABLES v

ABSTRACT vi

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION 1

Description of the Work Setting 1
The Writer's Role in the Work Setting 3

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM 5

Problem Description 5
Problem Documentation 6
Causative Analysis 9
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature 10

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS 16

Goals and Expectations 16
Behavioral Objectives 17
Measurement of Objectives 18
Measurement for Recording Unexpected Events 20
Description of Plans for Analyzing Results 20

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY 21

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions 21
Description of Selected Action 27
Report of Action Taken 28

V RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 34

Results 34
Discussion 43
Recommendations 47
Dissemination 47

REFERENCES 49

APPENDICES 52

A INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDELINES 52

B READING CHECKLIST 54

C REVISED CHECKLIST 56

D TEACHER SURVEY 59

E TEACHER SUGGESTIONS
FOR KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS 61

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Instructional Guidelines: Time Provisions for Language Activities	36
2. Portfolio Assessment	39
3. Reading Checklist Comparison	40
4. Textbook Inventory Comparison	41
5. Recycled Literature	42

ABSTRACT

Enhancing the Kindergarten Curriculum with Rich and Diverse Language Development Activities. Lakewood, New Jersey., 1991: Practicum I Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Language Experience/Languge Enrichment/ Language Acquisition/Whole Language/Emergent Literacy/Reading Acquisition/Beginning Reading/Reading Assessment/Basal Readers/Primary Education/Early Childhood/Children's Literature

The primary goal of this practicum was to provide opportunities for rich and diverse language activities designed to enhance the kindergarten curriculum. These activities were to replace the educational rigidity, skill-orientation and instructional fragmentation that were formerly apparent in the kindergarten classrooms. Flexibility in district policy regarding the kindergarten curriculum was established allowing teachers to utilize valuable instructional time for more developmentally appropriate activities.

The writer in collaboration with the Reading Specialist and the two kindergarten teachers designed new instructional guidelines that encouraged daily classroom activities to be devoted to language development activities. These activities replaced all formal isolated skill instruction. Two alternate forms of assessment were developed that were direct, classroom-orientated and process focused. Monthly book swaps were scheduled to increase the amount of and encourage the recycling of the available printed material in each classroom. The circulation of current educational research regarding emergent literacy and techniques to encourage and support its growth was arranged to increase teacher awareness and encourage the development of positive attitudes.

The outcomes of this practicum were very positive. An analysis of the practicum implementation has revealed that all but one of the objectives were achieved. The monthly book swaps did encourage the recycling of printed material but failed to significantly increase the amount. All other objectives were successful and some even surpassed this writer's expectations. The kindergarten curriculum has been enhanced with rich and diverse language development activities and both teachers and students have demonstrated positive attitudes regarding this enrichment.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Work Setting

This practicum was conducted in a large semi-urban school district located on the eastern seaboard. The district, once quite wealthy, services a mixed community ranging from an extremely low to a very high socio-economic status. The majority of the population that is directly serviced by the schools ,however, comes from the bottom fraction of the scale.

The district consists of five elementary schools, each housing approximately four hundred and fifty students. There is also one sixth grade school, one middle school and one high school. Each year the high school graduates approximately three hundred students.

The administration begins with a Superintendent of Schools and two Assistant Superintendents. Each have held their respective positions for the past ten years. Every school building has a principal and an assistant principal with the exception of the high school where there are presently three assistant principals on staff. Two additional administrators share the responsibility of running this school district. Their primary responsibility deals with the implementation of the district's Basic Skills program, although in an effort to conserve valuable school funds, their responsibilites have multiplied. In addition, since the abolishment of three significant positions, Director of Reading, Math Coordinator and Guidance

Director, the Assistant Superintendent in charge of elementary education has also assumed more responsibilities.

Presently, the only administrative positions held by females are the positions of Assistant Principal. Seven of the ten Assistant Principals are women.

The school population is currently about fifty percent minority and the percentage is projected to increase in the next few years. This percentage is divided equally between hispanics and blacks. However, the school personnel, although representative of a variety of ethnic backgrounds, is considered only thirty percent minority. The staff consists of a fixed population that has been employed by the district for ten years or more.

The state requires the district to administer standardized tests in each classroom, to every student, beginning in third grade. The local district has extended these requirements and these tests are presently administered to every student beginning in first grade. The district is concerned with improving scores on these standardized tests and each year, as a district goal, adopts one area for one grade level, and directs inservices, materials and additional funds towards improvement in the particular area.

In an effort to improve reading comprehension scores in third grade, a new basal reading series was adopted by the district three years ago. Promotion/Retention policies, report card grading and the individual student ratings that are completed yearly for each child are based on the progress that is made in this new reading series. This new series was implemented gradually beginning with kindergarten and first grade orientation during the first year and adding a grade level each year. This upcoming school year will bring this reading series into the fourth grade. A district inservice has been provided each summer in order to help the teachers in the newly

added grade level familiarize themselves with the new series.

As a result of the emphasis that is presently placed on improving reading scores, the district has adopted policy that provides for clearly defined guidelines for instructional activities for kindergarten through fifth grade. In addition, a Reading Specialist has been hired for each building in order to monitor the implementation and progress of the series. It is the direct responsibility of the Reading Specialist to report all communication to the Assistant Principal.

Although the effectiveness of this new reading program has been repeatedly questioned, the district's scores on the standardized tests have steadily risen over these past three years.

The Writer's Role in the Work Setting

The writer is presently an Assistant Principal in one of the smaller K-5 elementary schools in the district. The writer is certified not only as a Principal/Supervisor, but also as a Special Education teacher, an Elementary School teacher and as a Reading Specialist. The writer has been employed in each of these positions for a minimum of at least two years.

The writer's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, teacher/student scheduling, teacher evaluations and the monitoring of the reading program. The responsibility of monitoring resulted from the five years of experience that this writer has had as a Reading Specialist in the middle school and in another, larger, elementary school in the district. The writer is personally aware of the impact that the new reading series has had on the reading curriculum. The demands of this new series have been felt most heavily by the children in the kindergarten program where

expectation and demand have increased most significantly.

Prior to the addition of this new series on the kindergarten level, the four half-day sessions that are conducted for two and a half hours each day by the two experienced teachers in this writer's building, were governed by guidelines that were broad and flexible. Although the required skills were outlined, teachers had the freedom to choose the methods, techniques and order of their instruction. Kindergarten children were required to master 70% of the skills for promotion and the percentage of mastery would determine the grouping for first grade. However, since the implementation of this new series , the two kindergarten teachers in this writer's building have expressed concern regarding the effectiveness of the reading program and have continually voiced their concerns at our Cooperative Relations Project(CRP) committee meetings.

CRP has been established in this school district for the past three years although it has been implemented in this writer's building only during this past school year. Our committee meetings are conducted monthly between administration and faculty to resolve school based problems. CRP has recently been adopted by district policy as a mandatory step in the process of conflict resolution and it is an additional responsibility of this writer to address the issues that are brought to the meetings.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Children who are five years old before the first of October are permitted to enter school on a half day session. The basic goal of the kindergarten program is to prepare students to become effective readers. In this writer's district this task is accomplished through the implementation of a basal reading process which emphasizes specific skill instruction. All children entering kindergarten are placed in the readiness book of the basal reading series. Language Arts activities are scheduled for thirty minutes each day during which time these children are drilled on specific skills and supplied with workbooks for daily skill practice. Formal instruction of these skills is begun early as is formal assessment. Children are required to master nineteen vocabulary words and skills that include classification, left/right identification, sequence and inferring text from pictures. These skills are evaluated by three unit tests and one end-of-the-book test, totaling about twenty days of testing in all. District pacing guides have been established to keep both teachers and students on task.

Although reading is considered the major area of concern in this kindergarten curriculum, it is not the only subject that is addressed.

Kindergarten children are also supplied with and expected to complete penmanship books to improve their handwriting and are provided with twenty minutes each day specified for writing activities. Daily schedules are predetermined in order to address additional areas of the curriculum and specific times have been defined for specified instruction in these areas: math for thirty minutes, health for twenty minutes, Social Studies and Science must be scheduled in for fifteen minutes three times per week, and music and art are also alternated daily for fifteen minutes per day . In addition, choice time activities are also scheduled daily for twenty minutes Moreover, since teachers in this writer's district are entitled to a forty minute preparation period on a daily basis, forty or sixty minutes, depending on the session that the child is enrolled in, are spent participating in a gym, music or art activity.

Presently the district pacing guides and this imposed subject scheduling that have been adopted as district policy have occupied the daily routines that can be evidenced in the kindergarten classroom. Kindergarten teachers have little time for activities outside the scope of the curriculum. Therefore, kindergarten children, including those in this writer's building were not being provided with adequate opportunities for rich and diverse language experiences. Resolution of the problem in this writer's building saw the district policy adjusted and made more flexible so that language activities could be incorporated into the daily routines of the kindergarten classroom.

Problem Documentation

The existence of this problem was documented by a review of the

comments that were made by both kindergarten and first grade teachers during the April grade level meeting. At a CRP meeting , teachers requested the opportunity to meet in grade-level groups in order to establish guidelines that could be utilized for the individual rating sheets that are completed each June. This opportunity was scheduled for the following week. The writer was to facilitate at the meeting between the first grade teachers and the kindergarten teachers. At this meeting the four first grade teachers stated that they were unhappy with the guidelines that the kindergarten teachers were using to rate their children. These teachers cited five instances of children that had been rated as "4s", which is considered as a high average rating, that had to be returned to the kindergarten classrooms in October to repeat the grade because their skills were so weak. The kindergarten teachers retorted that they were following the guidelines outlined by the district policy and that the students that had been rated as high average met all the requirements to be rated as such. It became evident that both grade level teachers felt that the present curriculum was *not* providing adequate instruction and that alternatives for teaching the required skills were necessary. However kindergarten teachers argued that they did not have enough time to consider alternate approaches and techniques since they barely had enough time to complete all of the activities that are included in the basal reader.

A weekly monitoring of kindergarten plan books revealed that the entire thirty minutes that was utilized for language arts activities was devoted to skill development. References to numerous worksheets and workbook pages were made daily. This same review noted that the only writing instruction that was currently taking place was in the form of structured penmanship

lessons. No indication of any form of enrichment activity could be located.

A review of kindergarten classroom book inventories revealed that at the time each classroom library consisted of forty reading books, thereby indicating that there were presently two books available for each student . However, budget requests completed by both kindergarten teachers revealed that additional language materials were desired. Requests for "Big Books" and listening center tape recordings were made as well as requests to join book clubs to expand the classroom libraries.

Teacher awareness of district pacing guides and rating policies were evidenced at both the May and June grade level meetings when promotion and class groupings were reviewed. The groupings had been established on the ratings that are given to each child as detailed by the outlined instructions for completing the teacher recommendation forms Both classroom teachers knew how many of their kindergarten students were considered "below Level" and could objectively justify these ratings.

A desire to alter and adjust their present reading series was evidenced by the oral report that was given at the May faculty meeting when the two kindergarten teachers reported on a workshop that they had attended in May. The workshop had been geared towards a whole language approach to reading instruction and the two teachers expressed an obvious desire to implement new techniques. However, they also verbalized their reservations about implementing such a program due to the enormous amount of material that needed to be covered in the kindergarten curriculum. These teachers stated that time constraints excluded alternate approaches and they complained that even if they could find time, resource materials and handbooks containing ideas and techniques that support language development were limited.

Results of basal unit tests revealed that at least thirty-five of the eighty-four kindergarten students had received failing grades even though all instruction was geared towards the mastery of skills.

At a district wide meeting of all kindergarten and first grade teachers conducted this past June, only one of the ten kindergarten teachers stated that she had found time to fingerpaint with her students. An informal survey conducted at this meeting revealed that all but one of the ten kindergarten and nine first grade teachers attending were dissatisfied with the mandatory implementation of the new reading series.

As a result of this meeting a formal survey was conducted in each elementary building to clarify the disatisfaction. The results of the survey conducted in this writer's building indicated that teachers are dissatisfied with the enormous amount of time that is spent assessing skill mastery using tests that may in fact be invalid and that they felt that expectations for student achievement defined by the reading series were unrealistic for the children that were being serviced

Causative Analysis

One major factor that contributed to this problem was that these teachers were very concerned with their own accountability to the demands of the basal reading series. Teachers were adhering to the pacing guides and outlines that had been accepted as district policy. To date, teachers had had little input into determining what methods of instruction and assessment work most effectively. Guidelines and policy had been handed down from the top and teachers were expected to follow the outlined procedures. This teacher accountability was encouraging a premature introduction to

formalized instruction and assessment.

Since the basis of the promotion policy relied heavily on the mastery of the skills presented in the basal series and only one form of assessment was utilized for evaluation, the kindergarten teachers in this writer's building felt compelled to overemphasize the skill instruction that is presented in the basal reader. Any additional time that may be unaccounted for was spent reemphasizing the skills. Therefore, alternate methods and techniques had been excluded from the curriculum.

An additional factor related to the cause of this problem was the limited supply of materials and suggestions for methods and techniques that promote language development. Teachers had found it easier to follow the directions that are provided in the teacher's edition of the reading series than to search out ideas that may have proven to be more stimulating and challenging.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The importance of including language development activities in kindergarten curriculums that are designed to prepare children for reading has been documented many times by numerous authorities in the field of reading. Reading is a personal experience that relies heavily on previously established understandings. It is this personal understanding that assists the complex interpretations that the printed pages demand. The broader the experience, the broader the understanding. Effective readers understand.

Strickland (1990) states that comprehension is a complex task that is dependent on both home and school environments. Experiences in both these environments will help shape the child's understandings. These

CHAPTER THREE

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The major goal of this practicum was to provide opportunities for rich and diverse activities that would promote language development in the Kindergarten curriculum. This could not be accomplished without concern for establishing flexibility in the district policy regarding kindergarten instruction. This flexibility would allow teachers to utilize valuable instructional time for more appropriate language development experiences. In addition, teachers would be encouraged to develop an awareness of alternate teaching techniques that would assist them in making professional judgments concerning assessment and instruction.

Specific objectives would include the revision of the district's instructional guidelines for the kindergarten curriculum and the replacement of at least 80% of the specific skill instruction with language rich activities.

At the end of the three month implementation period the writer expected to see more flexible guidelines in instruction and a reading program that integrated listening, speaking, reading and writing in all aspects of the kindergarten curriculum. The kindergarten classroom was to become a place

understandings are also effected by the interdependent relationship that exists between reading, writing, speaking and listening. Success in one area is dependent on success in the others. The effectiveness of reading programs that emphasize one aspect and in return ignore all others is questionable.

The writer's review of the literature has disclosed a considerable amount of research that acknowledges the symbiosis that exists between the development of reading and the development of language. Although the interrelationship is acknowledged , it is ignored when specified instruction is designed. Language develops naturally as a result of language immersion. Yet when reading development is considered it is broken into bits and pieces based on the theory that the more parts that are understood, the more easily the whole is understood. This theory is the underlying philosophy of a skills-based approach to reading.

In a statement prepared for the Commission on Reading, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (1988), basal readers are presented as detrimental to the reading process. The basal reading series is often regarded as a complete system for teaching reading and often allows limited time and few options for any additional type of reading activities. These series rob educators of the right to make decisions about instruction and assessment and the series is developed on the outdated learning theory that suggests that humans learn from smaller to larger parts.

Larrick (1987) suggests that this skill-and-drill approach is boring for both teachers and students. Reading programs that systematically exclude additional reading activities from the curriculum in attempt to devote more time to skill-based instruction actually discourage a children's love for reading and impede reading progress.

In an interview with Dr. Richard Anderson who is the director of the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Goddard (1988) encourages him to summarize the results of a two year study that was conducted to assess current reading procedures. The results reveal that a greater emphasis must be placed on comprehension and that less time should be spent on skill development. His study suggests that many reading programs are unbalanced and put too much emphasis on bits and pieces of learning and ignore comprehension.

The absurdity of developing curriculums designed to improve reading that have in fact excluded the actual act of reading from the program is discussed by Bussis (1982). Children who need the most practice learning to read, receive the least opportunity to do so. Instead these children are supplied with added pages of worksheets to insure skill mastery. These children rarely have the opportunity to read because they become too busy learning skills.

Morrow (1987) surveyed six basal readers and found that elements and activities that promoted voluntary reading and interest in books were limited and more likely to appear in the supplementary sections of the basal reader indicating only optional value. Many classroom teachers do not have the time or the opportunity to utilize the supplementary editions.

Kline (1988) also comments on the increased amount of classroom time that is spent on reading instruction and the decreased time that is spent on reading. Similar suggestions are made stating that students that are experiencing the most difficulties in learning to read often have the least opportunity to experience reading. To remediate their reading problems they are supplied with additional skill work or more of what they cannot do.

Reading programs that are based entirely on a skills acquisition approach, as many basal reading series are, incorporate assessment techniques that are more concerned with the product than with the child. Harp (1988) states that educators have become more concerned with mastery of specific skills than with the child's individual improvement in a given area. The child's growth in using the processes of reading is often totally ignored.

Many school programs have apparently lost sight of the child and kindergarten curriculums are no exception. Many kindergarten programs have been designed as preparation for first grade. Peck (1988) reveals that kindergarten classrooms that are designed in this fashion are based on the premise that these young children can and do think and act like older elementary children. These kindergarten children are expected to work independently and silently and they are taught to compete for grades. The importance of play is completely ignored. Teachers in these classrooms strive to get the children ready not just for the first grade but also for the tests that will evaluate the effectiveness of the teacher in meeting the educational goals that have been established by the district for the kindergarten curriculum.

Furthermore many of the programs that are mandated for kindergarten classrooms include assessments that are inappropriate. While evaluation of academic growth is essential for planning and program design, Bredekamp (1987) states that valid assessments for the young child are very difficult to find.

Teale (1989) agrees that it is equally important to provide developmentally appropriate assessment as it is developmentally appropriate instruction. Young children have difficulty sustaining their

attention during lengthy assessments and often their abilities are underestimated. He states that assessments that are incorporated into basal reading programs often encourage a fragmentation of reading, overemphasize skill acquisition and pay too much attention to rote memorization. Reading of whole texts is often excluded from these time-consuming skill-based programs.

Mathews (1990) further reports that in order to improve the reading curriculum that it is also necessary to adjust assessment techniques. The need for complimenting instruction and assessment is established. It is stated that presently the very popular technique of learning to read by learning the specific skills involved confuses children about what reading really is and that educators further add to this confusion by evaluating their ability to read by evaluating their ability to master skills.

Winograd and Smith (1987) discuss reading attitudes and the climates that develop as a result of particular attitudes. The powerful effects that attitude and climate have on what is taught and what is learned are emphasized. When attitudes are primarily concerned with accountability reading instruction becomes primarily concerned with skill development. Skill instruction is accompanied by skill assessment and therefore, teachers must spend their efforts on the aspects of reading for which they will be held accountable. These skill based programs also deny teachers the right to make instructional decisions and instead encourages them to follow the decisions made by others more removed from the actual instructional setting. Furthermore when standardized test scores are the only measure of a successful reading program a negative climate for reading instruction often develops and the most satisfying aspects of reading are ignored.

Winograd and Paris (1989) discuss the effects that the emphasis on mandated, uniformed curriculums have had on teaching. It has been found that teachers who have become overzealous in their reliance on basal readers and specific skill instruction have encouraged children to develop into thoughtless readers and dependent learners. It is also suggested that the forms of assessment that are presently being used act as an additional roadblock to the development of reading ability. Many curriculums are designed to address the content of the standardized tests. Therefore, these tests rarely assess the quality or the effectiveness of the reading instruction.

Shepard (1989) further discusses the impact that these standardized tests have had on reading instruction. Testing has shaped instruction to the point now that an additional selling point of adopting a specific basal reading series is that the skills presented at each level are the skills that will be tested on the appropriate grade level, annual standardized test. Content is watered down to what is actually tested.

The operation of these skill-based reading programs is not based on our current knowledge of child development and learning capabilities. Too often what we know about the acquisition of reading ability does not coincide with the recent educational practices that are observed in many of today's classrooms. Reading is now understood to be the process of constructing meaning from the written text and when the emphasis of any reading program is on the acquisition of isolated skills, the act of comprehension is minimized. Therefore, the mastery of these isolated skills are taught at the expense of comprehension. The literature suggests that that reading programs that are based solely on a skills mastery approach are inappropriate and ineffective.

building Reading Specialist to review the literature.

Objective 3 was to be be measured by the writer's observation of classroom procedure and through direct monitoring of teacher plan books which was to reveal no more than one worksheet or one workbook page being assigned daily. Skills were not be taught in isolation or in order but rather by their relevance to the specific activity.

The measurement of objective 4 was conducted by the design and implementation of two additional forms of assessment that included a reading checklist and the development of individual portfolios of student work. The two kindergarten teachers along with the building Reading Specialist and this writer collaborated on their design and implementation.

Objective 5 was to be measured by the inclusion of monthly classroom book swaps conducted to expand the present amount of library books. Textbook inventories were completed at the end of the implementation period to evaluate the effectiveness of the monthly book swaps.

Objective 6 was measured by teacher observations during the implementation period. These observations were to reveal that kindergarten students were choosing language related activities during their choice time and were demonstrating a desire to read books voluntarily. Teachers were to observe at least eighteen of their students choosing a book activity each day during their choice time.

Objective 7 was to be measured by a structured teacher interview conducted at the end of this implementation period to determine positive attitudes concerning the implementation of this new language enriched program.

where children can and do actively participate in learning and where the importance of language development activities is acknowledged. Success should be measured by formal and informal monitoring and evaluation as well as by teacher self reports.

Behavioral Objectives

The following objectives were projected for this practicum:

Objective 1: During the three month implementation period, the district's instructional guidelines for the kindergarten curriculum will be revised so that at least one half of the school day will be devoted to language development activities as evidenced by plan book monitoring and teacher self reports.

Objective 2: The kindergarten teachers will demonstrate knowledge and awareness of procedures and activities that are designed to promote language development as evidenced by monthly self-reports and a structured teacher interview conducted at the end of the three month period.

Objective 3: Language development activities will replace 80% of the specific skill instruction during the implementation period as evidenced by informal and formal observations as well as through plan book monitoring.

Objective 4: The district's pacing guide will be ignored during these three months and two alternate forms of assessment that are direct, classroom-oriented and process-focused will be included to more effectively evaluate individual student progress.

Objective 5: By the conclusion of this practicum each kindergarten classroom will contain at least five books for each child and these books will be recycled on a monthly basis.

Objective 6: At the end of the three month period, Kindergarten students will demonstrate a positive attitude about reading and writing as witnessed by teacher observation.

Objective 7: At the end of the three month implementation period, both kindergarten teachers will demonstrate a positive attitude concerning a reading program that has been enriched by language activities.

Measurement of Objectives

Objective one was measured by the implementation of new instructional guidelines that was evidenced by formal and informal observations and plan book monitoring and included the following:

1. Fifteen minutes of reading aloud to children will be scheduled daily.
2. Kindergarten students' "choice time" will be expanded to thirty minutes every day during which time they can read books of their own choice or participate in any self-directed activity.
3. Kindergarten students will spend twenty minutes each day designated for writing activities in lieu of those devoted to penmanship skills.
4. An additional twenty minutes of flexible time will be allotted for any teacher chosen language activity.

Objective 2 was to be measured by a weekly review of teacher self-reports regarding critiques of the material that was disseminated weekly to both kindergarten teachers during the implementation period. However, the measurement of this objective needed to be adjusted as a result of a CRP committee meeting when teachers and administration agreed to limit any additional written requirements. It became necessary to arrange weekly conferences between the writer, the two kindergarten teachers and the

building Reading Specialist to review the literature.

Objective 3 was to be be measured by the writer's observation of classroom procedure and through direct monitoring of teacher plan books which was to reveal no more than one worksheet or one workbook page being assigned daily. Skills were not be taught in isolation or in order but rather by their relevance to the specific activity.

The measurement of objective 4 was conducted by the design and implementation of two additional forms of assessment that included a reading checklist and the development of individual portfolios of student work. The two kindergarten teachers along with the building Reading Specialist and this writer collaborated on their design and implementation.

Objective 5 was to be measured by the inclusion of monthly classroom book swaps conducted to expand the present amount of library books. Textbook inventories were completed at the end of the implementation period to evaluate the effectiveness of the monthly book swaps.

Objective 6 was measured by teacher observations during the implementation period. These observations were to reveal that kindergarten students were choosing language related activities during their choice time and were demonstrating a desire to read books voluntarily. Teachers were to observe at least eighteen of their students choosing a book activity each day during their choice time.

Objective 7 was to be measured by a structured teacher interview conducted at the end of this implementation period to determine positive attitudes concerning the implementation of this new language enriched program.

Measurement for Recording Unexpected Events

A log was kept during the implementation period. Unexpected events were recorded and the impact of their effects were outlined and defined. Anecdotal records of all comments were kept as were all personal reactions to teacher and student attitudes.

Description of Plans for Analyzing Results

Tables were utilized depicting before and after instructional guidelines to demonstrate objective achievement. Tables were also implemented to analyze results of the checklists and portfolios that were be utilized as assessment.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

Kindergarten children in this writer's building were not being provided with adequate opportunities for rich and diverse language experiences and the detrimental effects of excluding these language experiences in the kindergarten classroom have been clearly identified throughout the literature. Resulting problems from programs that ignore the symbiotic relationship that exists between listening, speaking, reading and writing have also been outlined in detail. However, many school district's, including that of this writer, continue to mandate reading programs that focus solely on skill instruction and continue to utilize assessments that are designed to evaluate mastery of these skills. Many professionals are cognizant of this continued practice and therefore suggestions designed as solutions can also be found in the literature.

Bussis (1982) describes the incongruities that typify a skill based reading program when she explains that reading skill instruction displaces actual reading in the classroom and that the most basic way of alleviating the problems that arise from a skills approach is to allow time each day for children to read books of their own choosing, to write and to be read to on a daily basis.

Larrick (1987) discusses the unappealing, mechanical demeanor of a skills approach to reading and how it affects the motivation to read. The unappealingness of the watered-down reading selections that can be found in most basal readers utilizing controlled vocabulary that makes the language unnatural and uninteresting is reviewed. Suggestions for a more appropriate program would include activities that would enliven the reading instruction and encourage independent reading. Trade books should be utilized as the core of the reading instruction. Literature immersion is advocated as is the absence of basal readers, workbooks and worksheets.

When reading skills are taught in isolation, the literature reveals that there is little time for other language development activites. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are integrated areas that should be taught as such. Calkins (1983) emphasizes the reading-writing connection and states that one cannot watch writing without also watching reading. The skills that are required for reading are utilized during writing activities. The presentation of these skills in writing is not only a more natural way but also a more relevant one. Calkins' ideas for teaching reading through writing are possible solutions for alleviating many of the problems that are encountered when the approach is solely skills- based.

Winograd and Paris (1989) recognize the limitations of a reading program that is developed solely on a skills based approach and offer alternatives for the monotonous nature of this type of reading program. Modeling, direct explanation, scaffolded instruction and cooperative learning are reviewed as methods that can enhance reading comprehension thereby improving reading ability. These techniques emphasize a reading, writing and thinking connection.

NCTE (1988) issued a statement concerning the escalating illiteracy rates and the relationship that basal reading series may have to this growing problem. It is suggested that the amount of time that is needed for the instructional activities that are included in the series precludes additional involvement with actual reading and writing despite evidence that suggests that reading and writing are significant to the development of literacy. NCTE suggests that teachers are encouraged to use alternate approaches and are allowed to exercise flexibility in eliminating inappropriate and unnecessary portions.

Problems are exemplified when this skill based approach is mandated in a kindergarten curriculum. Kline (1988) discusses the recent challenges that have been waved at the idea of reading readiness. Reading readiness is taught as a prerequisite to to the skills based approach . This readiness involves a series of exercises to improve visual. auditory and physical skills on the basis that their mastery will insure future mastery of future skills. This is based on the theory that children can learn to read by accumulating skills, and the earlier the acquisition of skills the more skills that can be mastered resulting in a better reader . Kline also suggests as a remedy the utilization of literature as the main form of instruction, not just as a supplement, and that this instruction should begin in kindergarten.

Another advocate of literature based reading programs, Taylor (1987) states that good literature encourages creativity and imagination and promotes the development of higher level thinking. It is stated that the foundations of comprehension are established early in childhood by promoting listening comprehension and if comprehension is the key objective in reading instruction than this prerequisite cannot be overlooked.

Good listening comprehension will be encouraged through good literature.

In a recent research monograph conducted to evaluate the effects of school policy and decisions on kindergarten children, Peck(1988) states that the skills-based curriculum encourages teachers to expend all of their efforts on meeting the educational and behavioral expectations that have been predetermined by the district's policy makers. A more effective kindergarten program is concerned with developing the desire to learn and that in these more effective programs all conducted activities are designed to promote that learning. The study further reveals that effective kindergarten programs do not have the school day departmentalized into tiny packages of twenty or thirty minutes for each particular subject area. Play is respected and subject learning is usually integrated into specifically planned projects.

This same study reviews the advantages of a full day kindergarten program and suggests that kindergarten program choices should be made available. The effectiveness of appropriate kindergarten programs also depended on the ability to keep the kindergarten teacher updated concerning all research that impacted on theories of child development.

The Commission on Reading (1984) reported the wide variation that exists in the abilities of children that are entering kindergarten. However, the function or reading must be emphasized and young children must learn about the interrelationships that exist between reading, writing, listening and speaking. This can only be accomplished through child participation in the specified areas. It is suggested that the most effective way to learn to write is to write and therefore the most effective way to learn to read is to read.

Some kindergarten programs have already recognized this relationship and

are incorporating ideas that are designed to promote these connections. Smith (1985), Trelease (1985) and Johnson (1987) have all discussed the need to expose young children to the rich language of unabridged stories. Many ideas and suggestions for related writing and speaking activities are provided as solutions for curriculum enhancement.

Strickland (1990) discusses the emergent literacy curriculum where literacy is recognized as an ongoing process that respects the integral connection between reading and writing. Participation in language related activities is encouraged and the intent is to make all activities relevant to the child. Programs reflecting an emergent literacy perspective are concerned with access to literature, writing activities and appropriate assessments. Skill hierarchies and specified instruction time are not present and skill development is not taught in isolation.

Many whole language classrooms incorporate these philosophies into their design and recently much has been written about whole language classrooms. Whole language is an approach to reading that is based on the assumption that children can learn reading by being totally immersed in language. Hayward (1988) suggests that implementing a whole language approach is a more appropriate format for teaching beginning reading. Whole language classrooms are inundated with printed material. Trade books are utilized as complete systems for teaching reading. Writing, speaking and listening are encouraged as well. Children are encouraged to work together to share ideas, to listen to and to read to each other. Informal reading inventories are often kept for each child in order to evaluate their progress. Teachers are expected to be excellent evaluators and to keep abreast of current research.

The significance of keeping abreast of the current research is emphasized by Mathews (1990). Research concerning assessment is equally important because effective instruction is dependent on effective evaluation. The benefits of numerous staff development sessions for review and discussion on the most recent theories and policies regarding the same are also suggested.

Johnston (1987) establishes the connection between effective teachers and effective evaluators. Current evaluation measures are ineffective and alternatives for refining the tests are suggested. Instead of refining the test, hone the evaluative skills of the classroom teacher. Teachers should be encouraged to gather relevant information about each child's growth in order to address their needs and assess their abilities instead of assessing mastery of specific skills.

Teale (1989) supports these statements concerning the values of teacher evaluation as compared to standardized test evaluation and states that the emphasis should be placed on the former type of evaluative measure. Teale states that reading folders and checklists are more appropriate forms for assessing reading ability.

According to Harp (1988) improvement in reading instruction is contingent upon improvement in the assessment tools that are currently being utilized to evaluate reading progress. Anecdotal records and daily observations are suggested as effective measures of progress.

Meisels (1989) states that many of the tests that are used in kindergarten qualify as high-stakes tests because the information that is gleaned from them is often used for classification, retention and promotion. As an alternative, valid screening tests to identify students who are at a higher

risk for failure and readiness tests to help meet the educational needs of the child should be utilized. Test results should provide information that will enhance instruction and not hold teachers or students accountable. Criterion-referenced tests are suggested as a way to monitor student progress.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

The literature has provided a number of suggestions and recommendations that encourage *enhancement* of the kindergarten curriculum through the inclusion of language development activities. Hiebert and Fisher (1990) are among many who suggest the development of kindergarten reading programs based on the whole language approach as viable solutions for the lack of language development activities that presently exist. In this setting the whole language approach would substitute the basal reading series.

Although much of the literature concurs with this idea and suggests that the basal reading series should be substituted with a more appropriate reading program based on our current understanding of young children, their abilities and their emotional, social and intellectual maturation, the writer had chosen to supplement, not to replace, the existing kindergarten curriculum. The writer made that decision based on the fact that other solutions required a policy change over which this writer had little control. The writer intended the results of this practicum to impact current policy and effect a possible positive change.

NCTE (1988) described many of the problems that have arisen from the total dependence on a basal series ranging from the misconceptions that learning takes place from smaller to larger parts to the rigid control that basal reading series exercise over both teachers and students. However,

they also made many valuable suggestions for ways to supplement the program to increase its effectiveness. NCTE recognized the lack of language development activities that are currently taking place in classrooms that are based totally on the basal reading series, and acknowledged the need to supplement these classrooms with language related activities. The writer felt that this was the most realistic solution , not only because it related directly to the literature but also because it addressed the problem and the causes and as a solution it would achieve the stated objectives.

Report of Action Taken

The solution implementation strategy for this practicum began after receiving approval to implement in September, 1990. Once this approval was received a meeting was arranged to discuss in detail the significant components of the practicum and to review the necessary adjustments with the building principal. After briefly discussing the goals of this practicum with the building principal prior to submitting the proposal to insure its feasibility, an expressed desire to have the practicum implemented had been indicated. However, it was noted at this time that formal approval would not be granted until the plan had been discussed with the Assistant Superintendent of Schools. A meeting to do so, was arranged.

The Assistant Superintendent appeared eager to establish a new procedure that would possibly address the complaints that he had been receiving from both teachers and parents concerning the stringent requirements of the kindergarten curriculum. His only request was to contact the HBJ consultant and make sure that the alterations would not adversely affect reading achievement. The writer did then contact our district's consultant

who expressed reassurance that the adjustments would be beneficial and who agreed to contact the Assistant Superintendent to reassure him of the same.

When the writer was sure that all necessary contacts had been made, the building principal was informed and a meeting was arranged with both kindergarten teachers and the building Reading Specialist to discuss the upcoming curriculum adjustments. Both teachers and the Reading Specialist expressed an earnest eagerness to participate in this practicum.

The solution strategy began by arranging the teaching schedules of both kindergarten teachers to allow for a common preparation time to meet and discuss progress as well as ideas. Literature that supports the action that was to take place was copied for future dissemination. Samples of ideas and methods for enhancing language development were collected and organized to demonstrate the new expectations.

During the first week of implementation, a formal meeting was arranged with the Reading Specialist and the two kindergarten teachers to establish new curriculum guidelines to better facilitate the implementation of this practicum. After establishing an agenda for the proposed meeting and sharing it with those involved, the building principal requested permission to participate in the meeting. An after school meeting was arranged and all five participants were present. All those involved in the meeting already had a personal awareness of the problem presented in the practicum, as well as input into its resolution, and therefore the solution strategy specifics were readily agreed upon and respective roles were reviewed. At this time the cessation of all formalized assessment was acknowledged and a brief introduction to the concept of portfolio assessment was reviewed. It was

then decided that another meeting would be scheduled to discuss this type of assessment in detail. The need for flexibility and the new instructional guidelines devised by the writer were reviewed. Teacher self-reports and the distribution of literature were also explained. As a result of not being able to address all of the items on the agenda , due to the lack of time, a second meeting was scheduled for the following day.

At this second meeting the process of teaching isolated skills relevant to the literature was reviewed. The writer read The Carrot Seed and and conducted a lesson on sequencing skills. The other participants then brainstormed on ways that other specific skills could be taught in connection with specific books. The writer noted all suggestions. These suggestions, along with the established guidelines (see Appendix A) formulated at the previous day's meeting were then given to the writer's secretary for typing, coallating and distribution.

During the second week of implementation, the district's scheduled grade level meeting was devoted to reviewing portfolio assessment. Relevant literature had been distributed to the teachers prior to the meeting to which they were to respond to in their weekly self reports. However, it was at this meeting that objections to the written self-reports were voiced and it was decided that instead of the written reports, the administration, the Reading Specialist and the two teachers would meet weekly during their common preparation periods to discuss the literature, their progress and their concerns. The writer agreed to keep a journal of these weekly meetings. In addition, the teachers agreed to keep a file of all successful activities gleaned from the literature that had been utilized. This file would be available for teacher sharing and administrative review.

After portfolio assessment was explained it was agreed that teachers would collect a weekly best paper from each student and house these papers in individual folders that would be utilized to assess individual achievement to note progress on report cards and at parent conferences that were scheduled in late November. Book swaps to increase the size of classroom libraries and to encourage recycling were reviewed.

The writer arranged to meet with the Reading Specialist during the fourth week of implementation to develop a checklist to assess reading achievement. This checklist (see Appendix B) was shared with the two teachers during the second month of implementation in order to provide the teachers with an opportunity to offer ideas and suggestions for any necessary revisions. Then the revised checklist (see Appendix C) was typed and distributed to the kindergarten teachers who administered them during this second month in order to compare the results with an additional administration of the *same* checklist at the end of the implementation period.

The writer continued to meet weekly with the kindergarten teachers to discuss their progress and concerns as well as to review the importance of all distributed literature regarding kindergarten curriculum enhancement.

During the last week of this second month of implementation the writer was to meet with the Reading Specialist to develop a survey that was to be utilized to assess the reading attitudes of the kindergarten students. However, due to a death in her immediate family this became impossible. The writer chose to meet with the kindergarten teachers during their preparation period to discuss the survey. At this time it was decided that the survey was unnecessary paperwork and that increased motivation and improved attitudes towards reading were clearly observable for each one of

their students. It was also reported at this time that there were no incidents of school phobia and both teachers felt that this could be attributed to the adjustments made to the curriculum . Students apparently enjoyed coming to school because school had become fun again.

Plan books continued to be monitored on a weekly basis to insure that language development activities were occupying at least 80% of the instructional time. Informal observations conducted weekly were arranged to insure the same.

The district scheduled grade level meeting during the third and final month of implementation was utilized to discuss progress and arrange for any final adjustments. Portfolio collection was arranged and personal co nferences were scheduled.

With the assistance of the Reading Specialist the writer developed a teacher survey (se Appendix D) that was to be distributed prior to the final teacher interview. It was felt that total reliance on an interview that might be biased because of a teacher-administrator relationship would not provide a valid means for evaluating the curriculum enhancement.

During the last week of implementation, the writer met with both kindergarten teachers and conducted a structured interview based on the clarification of responses obtained from the survey in order to better assess knowledge and attitudes about the adjusted kindergarten curriculum. The results of these interviews were reviewed for assessment. An additional assessment was conducted after all portfolios were collected and reviewed in order to note reading and writing achievement

The only significant deviation that occurred during the three month implementation phase resulted from the specific objections voiced by both

kindergarten teachers concerning the teacher self-reports and the proposed surveys to assess students' attitudes. The teachers were worried that these additional written requirements would create an additional burden in an already over paper-worked profession. The weekly meetings arranged as a substitute adequately met the writer's objective and all other solution strategies proceeded as planned.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS,AND DISSEMINATION

Results

The problem that existed in this writer's work setting was that the kindergarten curriculum did not allow for rich and diverse language activities that would provide the needed enhancement. The problem resulted from strict adherence to the stringent requirements of the kindergarten curriculum . This strict adherence caused teachers to spend too much time teaching isolated skills and prevented them from utilizing significant instructional time to develop language skills that would enhance the required learning. Specific district policies have encouraged teachers to utilize formal instruction and formal assessment much too early by making them accountable for specific skill acquisition via district pacing guides and promotion policies.

The solution to this problem was to allow more flexibility in the curriculum, to relieve teachers of their accountability to the strict requirements of the district's policies and to encourage them to utilize instructional time for the development of rich and diverse language activities. The writer felt that by providing the teachers with literature concerning the significance of language activities and literature about how to create and implement activities to support this development, teachers

would come to acknowledge its significance and trust in their own professional understandings of child development enough to include these activities in the classroom on a daily basis. Teachers would come to understand that language activities could be incorporated into the classroom without sacrificing the required skill acquisition.

The goals of this practicum were to provide for rich and diverse activities that would promote language development in the kindergarten curriculum. This could not be accomplished without establishing flexibility in the district policy regarding kindergarten instruction. This flexibility would allow teachers to utilize valuable instructional time for appropriate language development activities. Teachers would also develop an awareness of alternate teaching techniques to assist them in making judgments concerning instruction and assessment.

Specific objectives were designed to assist the writer in achieving these goals:

Objective 1: During the three month implementation period, the district's instructional guidelines for the kindergarten curriculum were designed so that at least one half of the school day was devoted to language development activities as evidenced by plan book monitoring, teacher conferences and informal observations.

The new instructional guidelines arranged for eighty five of the one hundred ten minutes that the kindergarten student spends in the classroom are devoted to language development activities.

In addition, by the end of the implementation period, weekly plan book monitoring did reveal that eight out of ten things that were planned daily were related to the development of language skills. Evidence of

storytelling, book sharing, partner reading and cooperative writing activities were observable in both teachers' plans.

Table 1

Instructional Guidelines: Time Provisions for Language Activities

Guidelines	Previous	Revised
Minutes	60	85
	Increase-25	
	Increase Percentage-75%	

Objective 2: The kindergarten teachers were to demonstrate knowledge and awareness of procedures and activities that were designed to promote language development as evidenced by weekly teacher conferences and a structured teacher interview conducted at the end of the implementation period. The kindergarten teachers originally were to utilize teacher self-reports to evaluate the readings but during a meeting of the school's CRP committee, it was decided that any additional writing requirements would not be assigned. Both kindergarten teachers and the writer compromised and agreed to utilize informal conferences for the reviews.

The weekly conferences involved discussions of the disseminated literature. These conferences revealed that teachers had in fact been reviewing the literature and their inquiries and personal critiques emphasized their awareness. Both kindergarten teachers kept a file of

activities that were utilized for the development of language skills. A careful screening of this file revealed that at least nine of the nineteen activities kept in this file were directly related to articles that had been reviewed during the implementation phase of this practicum.

During the second month of implementation, both kindergarten teachers requested permission to participate in a Science workshop given at a college nearby, that was advertising the importance of linking literature to the content areas. By the third month of the implementation period, these two kindergarten teachers were providing the writer with information.

In addition, the Assistant Superintendent became aware of the fact that the two kindergarten teachers had been reviewing current literature and as a result requested that these kindergarten teachers give their opinions concerning a full-day kindergarten program (see Appendix E). These opinions were to be shared at a district Reading meeting.

Objective 3: Language development activities were to replace 80% of the specific skill instruction as evidenced by both informal and formal observations and by plan book monitoring.

Weekly plan book monitoring revealed that teachers were utilizing no more than one worksheet a day and that all worksheets assigned were relevant to the activity evidencing that skills were no longer taught in isolation. Both the formal and informal observations supported the revelation that language development activities had replaced 100% of the specific skill instruction.

At least once a week the writer would visit each kindergarten classroom and found evidence that worksheets and workbook pages had been replaced by actual writing activities. Students' stories were displayed on bulletin boards and walls. The writer once had the opportunity to observe

kindergarten students sharing their stories during a weekly Show and Tell activity. All observable evidence indicated that skills were being taught in relation to good literature. During a formal observation, the writer witnessed a sequencing skill being taught after having the students listen to a version of The Three Little Pigs.

Objective 4: The district's pacing guide was ignored and two alternate forms of assessment that were direct, classroom-orientated and process-focused were included to evaluate individual student progress.

Individual portfolios were utilized to note progress. Students were to pick one paper per week to include in their portfolios. These portfolios were reviewed at two different occasions. The first review took place early in the second month of implementation and the second review occurred late in the final month of implementation. Although this attempt to assess development through the use of portfolios was a primitive attempt in that few criteria were established regarding their content, the writer chose to review the writing samples that were identified as the kindergarten students' attempts to retell a story.

The first review revealed a very primitive semblance of any message quality in all but two of the portfolios reviewed. Only twenty of the eighty-three reviewed included any random usage of letters at all. Handwriting was randomly designed with the intermingling of both large and small figures and no evidence of directional knowledge was noted.

The second review during the third and final month of implementation revealed that in sixty-six of the eighty-three portfolios evaluated ,an improved message quality and an understanding of directional principles (Henderson, 1990) was observable. Handwriting demonstrated a marked

improvement with an identifiable uniformity in all sixty-six portfolios. In nine of the sixty-six portfolios demonstrating improvement, an ability to use real words was evidenced. In these same nine portfolios, the papers with December dates also revealed an ability to utilize punctuation. This second review revealed that letter and word knowledge had progressed and writing ability had improved (Clay, 1985).

Table 2

Portfolio Assessment

	Portfolios		
	Reviewed	Improvement	Percentage
Real letters & Words	83	46	55%
Handwriting	83	66	80%
Directionality	83	66	80%

The only problem that resulted after the implementation of the portfolios occurred during parent-teacher conferences. The ten minute period scheduled for each conference proved to be insufficient for an adequate review of individual student work. In the past this ten minute period had proven to be sufficient.

The Reading Specialist and the writer devised a reading checklist during the second month of implementation based on the skills already identified by district policy as being the prerequisites for reading achievement A few additional prerequisites identified by the collaboration of the writer and

the Reading Specialist were also included on this newly devised reading checklist. Both kindergarten teachers administered a ch ecklist for each child and then sent them to the writer for review. Results indicated that the majority of the students were progressing and acquiring many of the necessary skills for reading achievement. The fifteen identified skills were evaluated with all eighty-three children at the two different intervals and an average increase of 27% in skill achievement was noted. In addition the checklists were utilized to identify specific strengths and weaknesses and the teachers carefully scrutinized all signs of growth to note improvement. Teachers began to realize that through personal, careful observation their professional judgments could be valuable in noting mastery and in identifying areas where further instruction was necessary. Total reliance on formal assessments was identified as unnecessary.

Table 3

Reading Checklist Comparison

	October	December
No. students	83	83
ME. Skill Mastery	5	9
Percentage	33%	60%

Percentage of Increase - 27%

Objective 5: By the conclusion of the practicum each kindergarten classroom was to contain at least five books for each child and these books

were to be recycled on a monthly basis. Textbook inventories were utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of the monthly book swaps that were implemented to assist with this objective

Although the monthly book swaps were instrumental in recycling the printed material in each classroom, these swaps did not substantially increase the amount of books in each class. The small increases noted resulted from donations from other students, parents and teachers.

The first textbook inventory noted forty books in each classroom library. This indicated that there were originally two or less books per student. The final textbook inventory showed that one classroom now contained fifty-four books of which twenty-eight were different titles and the other class contained fifty-seven books of which twenty-three were different. Although the amount of books per student did not increase dramatically, the number of new books indicated that recycling was achieved. The following table summarizes these results indicating that the monthly swaps were effective in recycling literature.

Table 4

Textbook Inventory Comparison

	Number of Books		Increase	
Class	October	December	Amount	Percentage
A	40	54	14	35%
B	40	57	17	42.5%

Table 5

Recycled Literature

Class	#of Titles October	Different Titles December	Percentage Difference
A	40	28	70%
B	40	23	58%

Objective 6: At the end of the three month period, kindergarten students were to demonstrate a positive attitude about reading and writing as witnessed by teacher observation.

Teachers observed that all of their students were choosing at least one language related activities during their choice time. Even students who were choosing to play with their toys or with classroom manipulatives were relating their play to a language related activity. Students were often observed acting out scenes from stories that had been read to them or building actual story settings. These results were enhanced by the careful scheduling of "choice time" directly after "story time".

Objective 7: At the end of the three month implementation period both kindergarten teachers were to demonstrate a positive attitude concerning the enrichment of the reading program with rich and diverse language activities as measured by the structured teacher interview.

The writer decided to distribute a teacher survey prior to the actual interview to avoid any necessary bias that might result in an arranged interview between administrator and teacher (see Appendix E). The

kindergarten teachers completed the survey and the responses were reviewed at the interview conducted following the implementation phase of the practicum. The teachers were asked to justify their responses on the five close-ended questions concerning their attitudes about the curriculum adjustments and the language activities that had been utilized to enrich the reading program. Their responses to the two open ended questions were then reviewed.

Both teachers responded positively to all five questions and indicated only minor reservations concerning the usefulness of portfolio assessment. This reservation resulted from the unstructured format in which materials were collected. Both kindergarten teachers stated a sincere intent to continue with the enrichment and suggested that additional meetings be arranged to meet with the other district employed kindergarten teachers in order to share understandings and ideas.

Discussion

A review and interpretation of the data collected indicates that all but one of the objectives were achieved. Although the number of library books available in each classroom did not increase significantly, library books were recycled on a monthly basis and students therefore had an increased opportunity to literature exposure which would not have occurred without the monthly book swaps. A positive attitude towards the adjusted curriculum was clearly evident and students have demonstrated an obvious interest in activities designed for the promotion of language development.

These results confirmed the writer's expectations that once the kindergarten teachers were allowed the flexibility in curriculum, they

would acknowledge the significance of language development activities and they would welcome the opportunity to develop and design activities that supported this development.

A review of the literature confirms the importance of language enhancement in the kindergarten curriculum. In an interview with Linda Leonard Lamme (1990), Pam Lee expressed her disenchantment with teaching isolated vocabulary and specific skills and states that it was this disenchantment that encouraged her to find a better way. She began using thematic units of study and skills were taught in a purposeful context. It was noted that after one year of a program , a formal evaluation was given and the results indicated that these children were much better prepared for the first grade and many of them were actually already reading. A review of the literature also reports the constant criticisms directed at programs that continue to teach skills in isolation and fail to acknowledge the importance of language learning. Cullinan (1990) states that children learn language when they utilize it to achieve their goals and therefore argues that reading, an integral part of language, can be learned as naturally when it is whole, functional and meaningful. A great deal of literature that supports this whole reading or whole language approach . Reutzel and Cooter (1990) conducted a study to compare the two approaches and their effect on reading achievement and found that whole language strategies and routines yielded comparable and even superior scores on a standardized tests than those strategies and routines that are practiced in the utilization of basal readers. This is supported by Slaughter (1988) who states that language based classrooms appear to be activities- orientated where children are learning reading by reading and writing by writing. In classrooms that emphasize this connection between language and reading it

is equally important to acknowledge assessment techniques that are concerned with individual achievement and not just skill mastery. Mathews (1990) reports that it is necessary to bring assessment in line with the more appropriate instruction that has resulted from the new educational awareness. In these classrooms teachers must feel qualified to make such assessments after reviewing samples of student work. Portfolio assessment allows the teacher this opportunity. Pearson (1990) elaborates on the issue of the whole language controversy and notes that even when teachers express the awareness and desire to replace the existing program, perhaps based on skill achievement, with a more appropriate whole language approach, specific mandated curriculum and assessment practices preclude a total acceptance as was evidenced in this writer's district. The only feasible solution was then to enhance the mandated curriculum with rich and diverse language activities.

The goals of this practicum have been achieved. Flexibility has been provided in the kindergarten curriculum and teachers have demonstrated the ability and the desire to use this flexibility to design and implement activities to promote language development. The importance of such activities has been acknowledged and the kindergarten classroom has become a place where children can and do participate in their learning and are no longer burdened by endless pages of skill practice,structured instruction and formal assessment. Teachers have gained confidence in their own ability to identify both strengths and weaknesses without depending on the results of the basal reader unit tests and that necessary skill acquisition can occur through relevant instruction instead of through isolated drill.

The implementation of this practicum has allowed both of the kindergarten teachers in this writer's building the freedom to make important decisions regarding curriculum and assessment and has provided them with an opportunity to learn to value their own professional opinions. The required reading assignments have assisted in establishing a professional link to others in the same professional community and have helped to validate these opinions. As a result, a few implications have become obvious.

The Kindergarten teachers will select more appropriate activities for their students when they once again begin to use the basal reading series that is required by district policy. The assessment of individual achievement will not be based solely on the scores achieved on the formal testing that also is required by district policy. Additional techniques and tools will be utilized to enhance the effectiveness of the kindergarten curriculum. Teachers will continue to keep abreast of the current research and integrate what they deem appropriate and worthwhile. It is hoped too that the students themselves have had a more enjoyable beginning to their educational careers and that this has encouraged more positive attitudes and the needed motivation that will allow them to become good readers and writers. It is believed that this enhanced beginning will result in improved achievement when these kindergarten students actually begin the district mandated formal instruction.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the informal assessments and the literature review be continued throughout the school year.
2. It is recommended that a better technique for increasing the number of available library books be considered. A book swap arranged with older students and the school librarian may be more effective in producing library books that can be added to the primary classrooms. These older students may be more willing to donate books from their childhood in exchange for older more mature books that the librarian may be willing to give up.
3. This writer would encourage the use of written teacher self-reports to more effectively monitor teacher reaction to the literature. It is recommended that the importance of these readings would then be more effectively emphasized.
4. It is recommended that specific guidelines governing the the portfolio assessment procedure be established prior to its implementation.
5. It is recommended that implementation of such a program be conducted with the specific purpose of policy change. The enhancement of any kindergarten curriculum identified as in need should be a requirement of any district's policy.

Dissemination

This practicum and its results will be shared with other administrators at a district wide principal's meeting. The writer has offered to share the results with all building Reading Specialists as well. It will then be reviewed with the new Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools in

hopes that it may affect a change in policy.

It is hoped that the results of this practicum can be combined with those of a colleague who is conducting a related practicum in this writer's district with first grade students. It is hoped that the combined efforts can produce results that can be shared with the reading company's consultants and district administrators and will evolve into a more effective use of the basal reading series.

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APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDELINES

Ella G. Clarke School

455 MANETTA AVENUE
LAKEWOOD, NEW JERSEY 08701
905-3620

WAYNE H. MATTHEWS
PRINCIPAL

JUDITH ANEN
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

RECOMMENDATION FOR ENHANCING KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM

Instructional Guidelines

1. *15 minutes daily provided for oral reading by the teacher to the class.*
2. *20 minutes each day will be designated for writing activities in lieu of formalized penmanship assignments.*
3. *30 minutes of free time will be provided during which time children can read books of their own choice or participate in any self-directed activity.*
4. *20 minutes of flexible time for any teacher chosen language activity.*

Assessment Procedures

1. *Portfolios will be kept for each child. A sample of the child's "best" work will be placed in a folder weekly.*
2. *Portfolios will be available for administrative review.*

Classroom Environment

1. *Please note that classroom environments designed to support literacy are dependent on a few fundamental principles:*
    a. *The importance of providing a rich variety of reading materials that are relevant to children's lives is recognized and observable.*
    b. *Reading and writing are viewed as interdependent subjects and opportunities to write are provided on a regular basis.*
    c. *Purposeful, repeated readings are encouraged to develop fluency.*
    d. *Assessment is process-orientated.*
    e. *Accountability is focused on concern for growth.*

** *(From: Anderson, W. (1990, July.) Summer Institute: Leadership for Innovation and Change. Presented for Nova University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.)*

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APPENDIX B

READING CHECKLIST

READING SKILLS CHECKLIST

Kindergarten Curriculum

NAME: DATE:

BIRTHDATE:

1. Imitates rhythm and sound .....
2. Notes likenesses and differences in figures.....
3. Shows interest in words.....
4. Recognizes name.....
5. Can write name correctly.....
6. Knows (8) colors.....
7. Identifies color names.....
8. Knows Alphabet.....
9. Identifies beginning sounds.....
10. Identifies Relationship Top/Middle/Bottom.....
11. Identifies Left and Right.....
12. Follows Directions.....
13. Classifies Objects.....
14. Identifies Sequence.....
15. Knows basic sight vocabulary.....

a	e	i	m	q	u	y
b	f	j	n	r	v	z
c	g	k	o	s	w	
d	h	l	p	t	x	

Codes: E = Exposure
P = Proceed

Please identify: S = Strong
W = Weak

APPENDIX C

REVISED CHECKLIST

READING SKILLS CHECKLIST

Student's Name: _____ Teacher: _____ ___

Date: _____

1. Imitates Sound and Rhythm: _____
2. Notes Likenesses and Differences _____
3. Shows interest in words _____
4. Recognizes Name _____
5. Can write name correctly _____
6. Knows (8) colors:

Red	_____	Yellow	_____	Brown	_____
Blue	_____	White	_____	Black	_____
Green	_____	Purple	_____		

7. Identifies Color Names:

Red	_____	Yellow	_____	Brown	_____
Blue	_____	White	_____	Black	_____
Green	_____	Purple	_____		

8.a Knows Alphabet (Upper Case):

M _____	S _____	P _____	K _____	J _____	Q _____
F _____	C _____	R _____	U _____	V _____	
L _____	N _____	B _____	D _____	X _____	
A _____	I _____	O _____	E _____	Z _____	
T _____	H _____	G _____	Y _____	W _____	

8.b Knows Alphabet (Lower Case):

q _____	u _____	k _____	p _____	s _____	m _____
w _____	j _____	g _____	h _____	t _____	
z _____	y _____	o _____	i _____	a _____	
v _____	d _____	b _____	n _____	l _____	
x _____	e _____	r _____	c _____	f _____	

9. Identifies beginning sounds:

Q _____	X _____	Y _____	U _____	O _____	T _____	N _____	T _____
W _____	V _____	E _____	K _____	B _____	H _____	C _____	A _____
Z _____	J _____	D _____	G _____	R _____	I _____	S _____	L _____
P _____	M _____						

10. *Identifies Relationship*
    Top _____ *Middle* _____ *Bottom* _____

11. *Identifies Left / Right* _____
12. *Follows Directions* _____
13. *Classifies Object* _____
14. *Identifies Sequence* _____
15. *Knows basic sight vocabulary:*

a. Dog _____	f. In _____	k. Yes _____	p. Out _____
b. You _____	g. Run _____	l. Is _____	q. Come _____
c. Go _____	h. The _____	m. Can _____	
d. I _____	i. Will _____	n. And _____	
e. It _____	j. No _____	o. Not _____	

CODES:

Exposure	*Proceed*	*Please indicate:*	*Strong = S*
E	*P*		*Weak = W*

APPENDIX D

TEACHER SURVEY

TEACHER: _____ DATE: _____

LANGUAGE ENRICHMENT SURVEY

CODE:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

1. The assigned reading has increased teacher awareness on key topics related to child development and early childhood education.

   1 2 3 4 5

2. Checklists can be utilized to effectively monitoring skill acquistion.

   1 2 3 4 5

3. Portfolios are useful in evaluating individual student achievement.

   1 2 3 4 5

4. The exposure to additional language development experiences has improved the kindergarten student's chances for success with formal instruction and assessment.

   1 2 3 4 5

5. The enhancement of the kindergarten curriculum has resulted in improved student attitudes towards reading.

   1 2 3 4 5

6. Do you intend to use these language development activities in addition to the activities provided by the basal reader? Please clarify.

   _____

   _____

7. What additional changes would you like to see implemented in the kindergarten curriculum?

   _____

   _____

   _____

APPENDIX E

TEACHER SUGGESTIONS FOR KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Mrs. R. Frank
Ms. B. Mincey

ELLA G. CLARKE SCHOOL

All Day Kindergarten Program

Pros

1. More time in academic environment
2. More time to experience hand-on fun activities to help enhance developmental growth
3. Possible 4 hour program (staggering increase to full day)
4. Exposure to Specialists: Computers, Library, Reading, Science
5. More Physical Education time to develop motor skills
6. Possible 2 meals in school
7. Time away from a "bad" home environment
8. More time for peer interaction
9. Longer day would alleviate the stress children are experiencing entering first grade
10. Teachers can get to know children and parents better thereby addressing individual needs more effectively
11. Friendships, interests and skills have more time to blossom

Cons

1. Immature child will not tolerate full day program
   a. Separation from family
   b. Short attention span
   c. Naps
2. Probable large class sizes or not enough classrooms and staff
3. No "K" Playground - children need daily physical activities
4. Kindergarten activities take alot of prep time - teacher will have to plan twice as many activities
5. Children are not developmentally ready for more academics
6. If curriculum is inappropriate, more time using this inappropriate curriculum will be detrimental to child development

Mrs. Frank will volunteer to work on Committee